

“GOOD JUDGMENT”**NO. 2688****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 19, 1900****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1881**

*“Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.
Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.”*

Psalms 119:65-66

WHEN the psalmist wrote these words, he was contemplating the goodness of God. In the verse preceding our text, the sixty-fourth, he sang, “The earth, O JEHOVAH, is full of thy mercy!” as if he could not walk abroad without seeing evidences of it, or look upward, or backward, or around him, without everywhere perceiving the omnipresent goodness of the Most High.

Whatever season of the year it is in which we take our walks abroad into the field of nature, we ought to be in such a condition of mind and heart as to see proofs of the fullness of God’s love everywhere around us, but especially, I think, it should be so in these summer months when the fields are ripening toward the harvest, and we see how God is fulfilling His ancient covenant, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” How thankful we ought to be that the Lord thus remembers the earth, and makes it bring forth the corn, and everything else that is needful to supply the wants of men! So let us bless God that the earth is still full of His mercy.

Is our own life in the same condition, or are we strangers to the goodness of God? Is there mercy all around us, yet none for us? Well, let others answer these questions as they may, there are many here present who can reply most emphatically, “No, the earth is full of God’s mercy, and we can each one of us say to Him, ‘Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.’ Though You have had so many others of Your creatures to care for, You have not forgotten poor me. Though I am but the merest atom, dwelling in a world which is itself nothing more than a speck when compared with the innumerable worlds that throng Your universe, yet You have not failed to let Your mercy come to me, even to me.”

I have sometimes lighted upon a little flower right in the depths of the forest glades. It seemed as if it were hidden quite away, utterly concealed by the umbrageous trees, and yet it bloomed as sweetly as if it had been watched over and cared for by the utmost skill, for somewhere between the boughs—I could not tell where—there was a little window through which the sun shone into the heart of that tiny flower, kissing it into perfume, and tinging it with those lovely colors which made it so attractive.

All around it the soil was bare, but this sweet flower flourished all by itself, and so, brethren, if you have lived in the midst of those who have forgotten your God, you have been hidden away in obscurity, yet the Lord has not forgotten you, and somehow—ay, and continually—the beams of His gracious sunlight have come even to you, and you must bless and praise and magnify Him to whom you owe all that you have and are.

Therefore cheerfully bear witness with the rest of God’s people to this blessed fact, and join with the psalmist in saying, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.” You may go further, and say, “Thou hast dealt well with all thy servants, O LORD, according unto thy word.” David had not always thought so, but he did think so when he came to sum up the total of his life’s experience and to write it down in his pocket book—for I suppose that the 119th psalm was made up of the entries in David’s diary as he went along.

This was the summary of all that he had experienced, that God had dealt well with him, but as he had not always thought so, he felt that he had been very much misled and mistaken in judgment, and hence he prayed this prayer, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.”

There will be three things for me to talk about tonight. First, *judgment expressed*. David expressed his judgment as to how God had dealt with him, and very sound and judicious judgment it was, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.” Secondly, I shall have to speak to you about *judgment desired*, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge,” and thirdly, I shall tell you about *judgment possessed*. The psalmist did already possess a measure of good judgment, he was not altogether left to be as the foolish, for he could truthfully say to the Lord, “I have believed thy commandments.” He had possessed judgment enough for that, and that is one reason why he might expect to have more, for it is an old law of God’s kingdom, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”

I. First then, here is David’s JUDGMENT EXPRESSED, “Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O LORD.”

Looking through his past life, he came to the conclusion, first, that *God had dealt with him*. It is a very awe inspiring truth, and one that should make us feel, that this life is a solemn thing, because in it God deals with us. We thought that we had been having dealings with our fellow men, and so we have, but all the while there has been another who has also been dealing with us, and we say, “Under all, and over all, and within all, have been the dealings of His providence,” or rather let us say, “the dealings of God Himself,” so that we can personally say, “Thou hast dealt with thy servant.” It will not be full of wonder if we add, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven. Surely the LORD is in this place.”

There are some who cannot or who will not see that God deals with men in this mortal life. Alas, for them! God is the very life of life, and there are some of us who could not be made to think otherwise than that God has dealt with us, for there have been portions of our life which have been so surprising, that whenever we look back upon them, they amaze us.

There is no novel that ever was written that can equal in interest the true life of a believing man. His path is strewn with wonders, and thick with marvelous displays of his Lord’s love. I will not refer specially to any man’s life, if I did, it would have to be the one I know best, that is, my own. Each man must speak according to his own experience, and I am compelled to say, and to say it without the slightest hesitation, “The Lord has dealt with my soul.”

As surely as I live, I have spoken with Him, and He has spoken with me. Nay, more than that, He has dealt out innumerable mercies to me, and constantly dealt with me, and through me He has dealt with many others also, and this I know, that life would not be worth living if it did not continually touch the hem of JEHOVAH’s garments. The very virtue of life streams into our life through our being in contact with Him. Where the little circle of our existence impinges upon the unutterably vast circumference of His power and glory, is where we get the blessings that we need.

I wish that we recognized far more clearly than we do that God is around us at all times. In the olden days, the saints often met with God—sometimes beneath a tree, or beside a bush, or in a lone desert, or outside a city wall, or by a brook at midnight, or in a furnace all aglow, they met Him in all manner of places, for He was much about in those good old days, or else there were men about then who were quick to record His manifestations to His people.

But have not we also beheld His face again and again? Have not we often had communion with the Well-beloved? Has He not had dealings with us also? Surely the beams and timbers of this house of prayer would cry out against us if we did not say, “Verily, the Lord hath been mindful of us, and He hath manifested Himself unto us as He doth not unto the world. Truly, God hath dealt with us.”

This is also true of every man, though not in the same sense, nor to the same extent. God has dealt with you all. Into whatever position you have been cast, God has had some dealings with you. Take heed

lest His dealings of longsuffering, being slighted, He should begin to deal with you after another fashion, for He has a rod of iron, and woe be to the potter's vessels in the day when He begins to dash them in pieces! Oh, that He might deal with us only in mercy, and never come to deal with us in wrath, as He will have to do with the men who go on in their iniquities! That is the first judgment of David that God had dealt with him.

But he also judged that *God had dealt well with him*, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD,” and this too, is our judgment. Taking God's dealings as a whole, He has dealt well with us. There are some points in His dealings with us, which have been so special that the words of our text hardly appear emphatic enough to describe them.

For instance, when I think of God's purposes concerning us from before the foundation of the world, it hardly seems sufficient to say, “The Lord hath dealt well with us.” When I remember the covenant, that “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,” I want to say something much stronger than that God hath dealt well with us, I prefer to say that He has dealt with us like a God, in a divine way, for which there is no earthly comparison.

Then, when He gave His Son to bleed and die for us, and when He sent His Spirit to convert us, and then to dwell in us, it is not enough if I say, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servants.” It is better than well, it is indescribably, unutterably well that God has dealt with us in the way of free, rich, sovereign, immutable, everlasting love—glory be to His holy name!

But take our personal experience, for I suppose the psalmist is here referring to that. How well the Lord has dealt with us in providence! Adding up all our varied experiences, we can truly say that all things have worked together for our good. Life has been a strange mixture for some of us, our coat of arms might be the checkers, black and white, for we have had sweets and bitters intermingled, bitter sweets and sweet bitters. What strange compounds many of our lives are! The evening and the morning have made the day from the creation, and we have had darkness and brightness, but putting the whole together, the result has been more than well.

If we had been the steerers of our own ship, we could not have steered it better than God has done, no, we could not have guided it anything like as well as He has done. We should have been sure to make a spiritual shipwreck long ago if we had been our own pilots. We would have been bankrupts before now if we had been our own managers, but God has managed our affairs so successfully, that looking upon the whole of them at this moment, we can truly say that God hath dealt well with us.

I may go much further than that, and say that if we were to take to pieces the whole of God's dealings with us, there is not one fragment out of it all of which we would not have to say that God has dealt well with us in it. This is especially true of those parts of His dealings with us which have seemed to be the roughest. Oh, how we ought to bless God for the use He has made of the rod! Among all the blessings of the covenant, surely there is none that, for our present imperfect state, has in it greater immediate virtues than the rod of the covenant from the strokes of which we have not been spared. How grateful we ought to be for sanctified affliction! Wisely did the poet write, concerning the varied experiences of God's children—

*“Tis well when on the mount
They feast on dying love,
And 'tis as well in God's account,
When they the furnace prove.”*

I am sure that, in looking back upon all the way that the Lord has led you, those of you who are His children will be bound to say that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life. There has not been a single mistake or one unkind act on God's part. He has cut you sometimes with the very sharpest knife He had, and it was necessary for Him to cut deeply with it so as to get out the very roots

of the cancer that was destroying you. You would have been lost if it had not been that you lost your all, and that loss was your greatest gain.

I have heard of one who said that he never saw till he was blind, and of another who said that he never ran in the way of God’s commandments till he lost the use of both his legs. Oftentimes, that which has thrown us down has, in the best sense, lifted us up. So each believer can adopt the language of the text and say, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.” In every place, and at every time, it has been all well right through.

It has also been well in every sense of the word. “Well”—that is to say, *wise*. “Well”—that is to say, kind, which is something more than being simply wise. “Well”—that is to say, kinder than kind, the kindest of all. What God has done for us has always been the best thing that could be done, it could not have been better. I sometimes fear that, on our part, it could hardly have been worse, shame on us that it was so bad! But on His part, nothing could possibly have excelled it, every step that He has taken has been full of infinite love and wisdom.

And as to the ultimate effects and results of it all, it is well. There will come something better for us out of all that God has prepared for us than has come out of it yet, all is *well*, and all shall be *well*. Pronounce the word with all the emphasis that you can lay upon it, and look at it from all sides, and then say, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.”

Now let me shift this kaleidoscope a little, that you may take another peep at all the marvels that it contains. Notice next, that *God has dealt well with us as His servants*, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.” Of course, He has dealt well with us as His sons, giving us the child’s portion and the heir’s portion. He has dealt well with us as His bride, as the members of His mystical body, and so on, but David said to the Lord, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant,” and I will try to show you how He has dealt well with us as His servants.

First, He has given us blessed work to do. There is no such employment as serving God, this employment is our enjoyment. To serve God is to reign. The Lord has sometimes given us difficult service—so we have thought, but He has always given us proportionate strength, and has never exacted of us more than He has enabled us to accomplish.

On another occasion, David wrote, “Unto thee, O LORD, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work.” That is to say, “You have supplied the straw when you have expected the bricks to be made. You have given the five talents if you have looked for five other talents to be gained as interest on them. You have dealt well in giving little work to those who have had little strength, and less work when the strength has grown less, and more strength when more work had to be done, and most strength of all when work and suffering came together. You have been very considerate of Your servant’s broken bones and many weaknesses. You have dealt well with Your servant in that way.”

But servants expect to receive not only work, but provision, and the Lord has dealt well with His servants in that respect also. He has always kept us in livery, sometimes we may have thought that our clothes were getting pretty well worn out, and that it was time for us to have a change, but it has always come. We have always had food also. God has never kept a stinted table, and we may say of our Heavenly Father’s house that there is always bread enough and to spare for all His servants.

The Lord has supplied us in providence, and especially in grace, what fat things full of marrow, what wines on the lees well-refined has He prepared for us! God never starves His servants, or puts them on short commons. No, each one of them can truly say to Him, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according to thy word, both in provender and in labour.”

And servants like, besides that, to get a word of encouragement now and then from their masters. There was one who left an excellent master, with whom he had traveled all over the Continent, and when his master asked the reason why he wished to leave him, he answered, “You have not been unkind to me, you have given me all the wages that I wanted, but when I have been with you in the darkest nights, in the heaviest tempests, in the most terrible frosts, you have never spoken a cheering word to

me, and I cannot continue to live such a life as that.” You know that a kind word or a smiling look will go a long way, and in this respect also we can each one say, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.” How graciously He has smiled upon us when we have been trying to serve Him! How much He has made of our little! He has often commended us even when we have been blaming ourselves, and when we confessed that we were unprofitable servants, and only spoke the truth when we said so, He has been ready to say, “Well done, good and faithful servants.”

He has often said to us, “I know your works,” at the very time when we have hardly known them ourselves, or if we have known them, we have wanted not to recognize them, but to pass them by as if they were unworthy of notice. The Lord has indeed dealt well with His servants in the way of encouragement.

And so He has in respect to our wages. He has given us earnest of the pay which we shall receive at the end of our day’s toil. Oh, that blessed pay! How rich we shall be when we receive it, not of debt, but all of grace, a whole heaven, and a whole Christ, and a whole God, for our whole hearts to enjoy throughout the whole of eternity! Was there ever such a “penny” as that paid to laborers at the close of their day’s work?

But even on the way, the Lord has given us blessed earnest, sweet pledges of what is yet to come to us. We have good cause to love our Master, and to love His work, and to be grateful to Him for the pay He gives us for it, and again, each one of us can say to Him, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.” Is there any one of His servants here who will not say this? I always think that God has dealt well with me in not turning me out of doors, and I still pray the prayer—

“Dismiss me not thy service, Lord,”—

for I count it my highest honor to be permitted to do anything for Him. He might well say to any of us, “You are not worth your salt,” and send us adrift, but He has not done so, and we can still say to Him, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, and permitted him still to take his place in the ranks of those that wait upon thee, and therefore, blessed be thy holy name!”

So far, you see, David’s judgment is one in which we fully coincide, “Thou hast dealt with thy servant,” and “Thou hast dealt well with him.” But we also agree with him that *God has dealt with us according to His Word*. It greatly sweetens a blessing when we know that it comes to us by way of the promises. Whatever God has done to us, in love and kindness, is only just what He said He would do.

Look back now, and see whether the print of providence does not exactly answer to the type of the promise. Concerning many things that we have needed, God said, “I will give them to you,” and now we can say to Him, “Thou hast done so.” He promised that He would be with us, He promised that He would bless us, He promised that bread should be given us, and that our waters should be sure, He said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and all along He has acted according to His Word.

Even when He has chastened us, He has only fulfilled His own Word, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” His pruning has been as Christ said it would be, “Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” When He chastises us for our disobedience, He only fulfils His threatening, “If ye walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you.”

It is all according to the Word, and if anybody wants to know what the life of a Christian is, let him read what the promise of God is, for as far as God is concerned in the life of a Christian, the promise is a prophecy of what it will be, and the prophecy is fulfilled in the life of every man who puts his trust in God.

Now this was a sound judgment on David’s part, but it was a judgment at which he appears to have arrived after God’s dealings with him were almost ended. It would be far better, and much wiser, if we could daily learn to say, “Thou art dealing well with Thy servant, O LORD, according to Thy Word,” but we are often so foolish that like old Jacob, we say, “All these things are against us.” David probably felt that in former days, he had often made a mistake, so he here corrects himself and expresses a true

and just judgment concerning the dealings of God with him. May we be taught to judge righteously of God while the work is still going on!

Is there anybody here, out of all God’s people, who will do otherwise? If so, let me just suggest, that if we cannot say, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according to thy word,” then in effect, we do say this, “Thou hast not dealt well with thy servant, O LORD; and thou hast not kept thy word.”

Is there any child of God prepared to talk like that? Not one, and if you or I cannot say, “Thou art dealing well with thy servant, O LORD, according to thy word,” then we are in effect saying, “Thou art not dealing well with thy servant, and thou art not acting according to thy word.” Are we prepared to say that? No, not to say it—not to *say* it—perhaps we should be more honest if we did, but if anybody thinks it, let him prostrate himself before the God of heaven and earth, and ask for the forgiveness of his ungrateful unbelief in daring to think that God can be otherwise than good and kind towards a soul redeemed with the heart’s blood of Christ, chosen from before the foundation of the world, and ordained to everlasting glory with God Himself.

May we fall back again, then, upon the bold assertion of the text and say to God, if we do not say it to anybody else—say it as we walk home, and say it as we kneel by our bedside—“Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according to thy word; and blessed be thy holy name!”

Now I must pass on to speak very briefly concerning the other two heads, they are the practical application of this first one.

II. Secondly, we have to consider GOOD JUDGMENT DESIRED, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge.”

David felt that his judgment had been greatly at fault, so that he had made great mistakes with regard to God, and now that he had come to a more correct judgment, he offered this prayer, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge.” This is what all Christians need—better judgment—more good judgment—more sound judgment.

May God help us, for the future, first, to *judge His providence better!*

*“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace.”*

Next, *judge your sufferings better*, and learn to believe that it is good for you that you have been afflicted. May we get our judgment more correct, so that it may not be so hasty, or so unbelieving! May our judgments not be, as they sometimes have been, desponding, dark, dreary! We need to have our judgments brightened up. Pray God to make them better.

Then we shall be able to have *good judgment in matters of doctrine*. I wish we could get all Christians to have good judgment in this respect. They go to hear one man who is very fluent, he preaches Calvinistic doctrine, and it is very sweet to them. Another preaches Arminian doctrine, and contradicts all that the first one said, but to these people it is equally good, for he also is an eloquent man. Almost any error is sucked down by nine out of ten of the professors of the present day so long as it is sufficiently sugared. If you will but spice it well, it matters not to them what it is.

I have been shocked to find how some will go, and listen to the veriest drivel, which is not the Gospel of God at all, so long as it is but fitly spoken. May God give us good judgment upon this matter! We have not as much as we ought to have, else we should have judged more wisely concerning much that we have heard.

“Lord, teach me good judgment and knowledge,” means, “Let me know You. Let me know Your truth. Let me know the voice of Christ, so that I may not follow a stranger, because I know not the voice of strangers, and have that discretion which is not to be deceived.” There are some preachers who would deceive the very elect, if it were possible, but the true saints shall not be deceived, for God will teach them “good judgment and knowledge.”

We also need *good judgment concerning our temptations*. We are often like silly little birds, which, for want of judgment, are allured by a bird call. Satan, like a cunning fowler with foolish birds, makes sure work of uninstructed Christians. They are taken as in a net, and if the Lord did not graciously deliver them, they could not escape. We need good judgment to spy out the hidden temptation, and to see through the devil's tricks and traps. He does not come to men showing his hoofs and horns, but he comes as an angel of light, and he is never so much a devil as when he appears to be an angel of light.

I feel pleased to think that the Revised Version has altered that clause in the Lord's prayer to, “Deliver us from the evil one.” Some do not like it, because they do not believe in the evil one, or perhaps because they are too much his friend to wish to pray against him. But in these days, he is so intensely an arch enemy, and he slinks about so craftily, that many people have begun to imagine that he no longer exists, and he can do ten times more mischief because of that delusion, so we will pray against him flat in his face, “Deliver us from the evil one. Give us good judgment and knowledge, that we may not be ignorant of his devices.”

We also need good judgment as to the many false spirits that are gone forth into the world. “Try the spirits,” is an admonition that is still necessary, and we need to be taught good judgment that we may be able to do it, and discern between good and evil.

I will not detain you by speaking at any length upon this point, only I just want to say that if we have been mistaken about God, the probability is that we have been mistaken about other things, and even if the dealings of our own Heavenly Father have sometimes perplexed us, and we have come to wrong conclusions concerning them, we ought to distrust our own judgment about other things, and constantly go to God the Holy Spirit for teaching and enlightening, offering this prayer, “Teach me good judgment.”

I wish that those who are troubled with skepticism and doubt would go to God in this way. If men who have difficulties would tell them to God in prayer, spreading out their dilemmas before the Most High, I believe He would teach them good judgment, and they would see their way where now everything seems to be dark and dubious. Let this plan be tried, and I believe it will not be tried in vain.

III. My last point is concerning JUDGMENT POSSESSED.

The psalmist had some good judgment, and therefore he asked for more. He possessed a measure of right judgment, which he expressed in these words, “I have believed thy commandments.” That is a very unusual expression, because, generally, people believe doctrines or believe promises. But David says that he believed God's commandments. That is a phase of faith that is very seldom spoken of, and it means that, notwithstanding all David's troubles, he had believed God's sacred law to be a wise one, a just one, and a true one.

He had believed that it came from God, and he had therefore revered it. He had believed it to be infinitely wise, and therefore he followed it. He believed it to be right and therefore he stuck to it. He believed that in the end, it would turn out to be the wisest policy to do as God had bidden him, so he stood to that. He seems to say, “Lord, I am very foolish, yet I have had wit enough given me, by Your Spirit, to believe that Your commandments are the best that can be, so I wish to keep them, and to believe that Your commandments are the best guide to me in life, and therefore I desire to follow them.”

Brother, if you do not know much, yet, if you know enough to be able to say to God, “I have believed Your commandments, and by Your grace, I have not departed from Your truth,” then all will come right with you. Suppose a man is tempted to steal. I do not mean to go and pilfer, but to falsify an account, or cheat in business, or what is much the same thing, to get money by borrowing it when he knows he cannot repay it? Well, the man who acts like that does not really believe God's commandment, “Thou shalt not steal.”

I have heard of one who wanted wood in winter time, and his neighbor in the next farm had a stack of wood. As he walked along the road, something whispered in his ear, “All things are yours.” “Well,” said he, “that thought comes from God, I will go and take home a log or two.” When he had climbed

over into the field, and begun to get the wood out of the stack, there came to his mind another passage of Scripture, “Thou shalt not steal,” and he dropped the wood directly.

My dear friends, never believe an impression that is contrary to God’s Word, in fact, I would like you not to believe any impression but that which comes from Scripture itself. I met the other day, a person who was impressed that he was to preach for me. He said that it was revealed to him, by the Spirit of God that he should preach for me one Sunday. I told him that he should do so when the Spirit of God also revealed it to me, but that I did not believe in lopsided revelations. I thought that it was needful for the revelation to come to me as well as to him. When it does, I will attend to it.

Some people have, every now and then, a supposed revelation that just suits them. A man believes that it is impressed upon him to do exactly what he wants to do. For instance, he is sure that he ought to get married, many young people are quite sure about that matter when it would be far better for them not to do anything of the sort. A man is often impressed that he ought to do a thing simply because he wants to do it, the wish is father to the thought.

Now, if you believe God’s commandments, you will not always believe in what looks like a providence. Do you not know that there are devil’s providences sometimes, at least that is what I call them. When Jonah went down to flee unto Tarshish, he found a ship going there, was not that a remarkable providence? Perhaps he said to himself, “I felt some doubt about whether I was right in going there, but when I got down to the seashore there was a ship, and there was just room for me to go as a passenger, and the fare was just the amount that I had got, and so I felt that it must be of the Lord.” Nonsense Jonah, it is of the Lord for you to do what is right, and if you have judgment enough to do that, let others be foolish enough to follow this impression or that, this whim or that, this notion or that, which may come to them from Satan, or their own evil hearts.

Be you dear friends, wise enough to stand to the plain commandments of the Word. God help you to do so, for uprightness and integrity shall preserve you, and nothing else will. “Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” Those who do not believe God’s commandments, and run off to all sorts of shifts, and schemes, and tricks of their own, will have to suffer for it. Pray to God to teach you good judgment, and if He has given you a measure of it, may He continually give you more and more, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 119:64-72

Verses 64-67. *The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray:*

Prosperity had been to the psalmist like the gap in the hedge through which the sheep wander from the shepherd; but affliction had been to him like the prickly bushes that often stop the sheep from wandering still further, so he says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray:”—

67. *But now have I kept thy word.*

What a benefit, then, affliction had been to him, and what a blessing it often is to us! So, instead of dreading it as we usually do, we ought to welcome it, and be on the lookout for the blessing which is to come to us through it. Many a child of God has joined with Dr. Watts in singing—

*“Father, I bless Thy gentle hand;
How kind was Thy chastising rod;
That forced my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wandering soul to God!”*

Foolish and vain, I went astray

*Ere I had felt Thy scourges, Lord;
I left my guide, and lost my way;
But now I love and keep Thy word.”*

68. *Thou art good, and doest good;*

What a delightful description this is of God and His works! Who is good? Our Lord Jesus supplies the answer, “There is none good but one, that is, God.” And His works are like Himself, “Thou art good, and doest good.”

68. *Teach me thy statutes.*

In the twenty-fifth psalm, David wrote, “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way,” and here, because the Lord is good, and does good, the psalmist prays, “Teach me thy statutes.” He will teach us that which is good because He is Himself good. What a blessing it is for us to have such a Teacher! How wonderful it is that God should be so condescending as to take us into His school!

69. *The proud have forged a lie against me:*

They have kept on hammering away until they have finished the falsehood; they have “forged” it, as one forges a deadly weapon in the fire.

69. *But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.*

“It is no use for me to trouble about them. When they have forged one lie, they will probably forge another, and there is practically no end to that black business. It is no use for me to try to answer them, I will turn to a far more profitable occupation: ‘I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.’”

70. *Their heart is as fat as grease;*

Insensible, lifeless—they have no conscience, no feeling, they are so proud of their prosperity that they are afflicted with fatty degeneration of the heart.

70. *But I delight in thy law.*

What a blessing it is for us to find our fatness there—to delight in the marrow and fatness of God’s law!

71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes.*

The psalmist was so impressed with the benefits which he had derived from his afflictions that he returned to the subject, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”

There is much teaching power about God’s rod. He always keeps one in His school, and it is greatly needed for such dull scholars as we are. Many a child of God can repeat the psalmist’s testimony, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” “Thou hast whipped a little knowledge into me, and not much has come in any other way.”

72. *The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

David had a great deal of gold and silver, far more than any of us have, but yet he thought very little of it in comparison with God’s law. Many people despise gold and silver because they have not got any. The fox said the grapes were sour because they were beyond his reach. But here is a case, in which a man had as much gold and silver as he could ever want, yet he says that the law of God’s mouth was better than all of it, and he was wise in saying so. For gold and silver can be stolen, riches often take to themselves wings, and fly away, even great wealth may soon be spent and gone, but God’s law never leaves those who love it, nor lets them lose it. When all our spending money is gone, then is the commandment of God our treasure still. Happy is everyone who can say, with David, “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—73 (PART 2), 681, 214

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